



## **Office of the Mayor**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **City prepares groundwork for new animal shelter**

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Eleven years after starting its own Animal Control program, the City of South Bend is investing in a plan for a new animal shelter in Kennedy Park that could nearly quadruple the size of its existing facility and, officials hope, increase pet adoptions and volunteers.

The new shelter would be part of a renovated and expanded facility at 521 Eclipse Place in the west-side park.

The current century-old facility at 135 S. Olive St. was converted from a former fire station into a shelter in 1996 when South Bend Animal Control began. After two years of research by Animal Control staff with an architect who designed shelters in Fort Wayne and two other Indiana communities, the city's recently approved 2008 budget includes \$125,000 in capital lease payments that could be made toward a new facility.

"In Fort Wayne, adoptions more than doubled after building a new facility and the number of volunteers increased dramatically," said Gary Libbey, manager of the Animal Control division for South Bend's Department of Code Enforcement. "A bigger, more modern shelter is going to allow us to do a better job for the animals and citizens of our community. We're going to be able to have more animals available for adoption."

Unlike the current 3,100-square-foot facility, the new 10,000- to 12,000-square-foot shelter would give South Bend Animal Control space it doesn't currently have for:

- Its own spay-neuter clinic. People who adopt pets now sign a form indicating they will have the procedure performed by a private provider.
- An expanded lobby and reception area.
- An adoption preparation area for bathing and grooming of animals

- Interaction rooms for families to meet with prospective pets.
- A confined area to unload animals from vehicles.
- A secure area for the quarantine of bite case animals.
- A treatment area for sick and injured animals.
- A secured area that is protected from the elements for after-hours drop-offs.
- Storage space for food and other supplies.
- Training, meeting and cleanup facilities for staff.

“Modern animal shelters are constructed with improved disease resistant materials, and offer a less stressful environment for the animals housed there,” Libbey said. “Visitors to the shelter searching for a new or lost pet will encounter an inviting comfortable environment to find their companion.”

Although formal plans and cost estimates have not been finalized, rough estimates range from \$1.5 million to \$1.9 million. Libbey and Catherine Toppel, director of Code Enforcement, have toured other shelters with the architect responsible for their design, Thomas Farny of Grins-Felder Associates Architects.

The proposed site is a former Housing Development Corp. facility that until 2006 served as a site for Code Enforcement cleanup crews. Built during the Roosevelt administration, the concrete free-standing building has no interior supporting walls, making it ideal for renovation.

“We’re still in the early stages,” said Toppel, and once an architect is hired “official plans will be developed to give an accurate cost of a new shelter.”

In 1996, the Common Council appropriated \$108,000 to renovate a former fire station at 135 S. Olive St. to create the shelter. Three years later, a \$100,000 project reconstructed the second story to make room for cages for small animals and an area to allow family interaction with adoptive pets.

South Bend Animal Control, a division of the city’s Department of Code Enforcement, today handles about 4,000 animals per year.

“There’s a local group that’s been trying to get a dog park up and running,” said Libbey, who said an adjacent dog park would be worth considering after the shelter is built. “It would obviously be a nice accompaniment to the animal shelter.”